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SUBJECT: MEXICAN VIEWS ON CLIMATE CHANGE NEGOTIATIONS

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: In an October 21 tour d'horizon of the climate change negotiations from the Mexican perspective, Mexican Ambassador Luis Alfonso de Alba, Special Negotiator for Climate Change at the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs (SRE) called the US-Mexico climate change relationship 'frank, candid, and close' but expressed some frustration with the latest U.S. funding proposal and urged a specific funding commitment from the United States in order to move the process forward. Alfonso de Alba characterized the European proposal in Bangkok for a unified Kyoto-like document to be signed by all parties as a "big mistake," and noted that Mexico's proposal for a video conference of heads of state/government foresaw a need to settle some issues, post-Barcelona, at the highest level. Alfonso de Alba also discussed Mexico's hosting of the 2010 COP-16 and the country's resource constraints. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) Econoffs called on Mexican Ambassador Luis Alfonso de Alba, Mexican special negotiator for climate change at the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs (SRE), on October 21. Also present in the meeting was Socorro Flores Liera, Director General of the Mexican Office of Global Issues in SRE. Ambassador Alba characterized the US-Mexico climate change relationship as "frank, candid, and close in substantive terms." He noted, however, that the proposal presented by the United States in Bangkok, with obligatory greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions for both developed and developing countries, would undermine Mexico's Green Fund proposal and also make it difficult to get developing countries on board without a financing package. The public perception now is that "you're pressuring the developing countries rather than working on a package of developed country commitments that will move the process ahead." He said that he personally feels that the developing countries should have greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets as well, but that the current lack of funding on the table has made things contentious.

¶3. (SBU) Alfonso de Alba noted that he saw the financing issue as breaking out into three specific areas: what a country will do on its own; what can be achieved through market mechanisms, irrespective of who is financing it; and the international funding, which should be for both adaptation and mitigation, and of which the Mexican Green Fund proposal is an example. He said that the Mexican official from the Mexican National Institute of Ecology had gone too far during the London MEF meeting October 18-19 in proposing that developing countries should have GHG reduction commitment plans -- this had disappointed Brazil, India and South Africa. Similarly, he noted that language and word choice had also inadvertently functioned as a bar for some countries, which see imposition of low-carbon growth as threatening, but which might respond differently to another term of art. Alfonso de Alba stressed that the United States has to make decisions and accept a commitment within the international package of assistance for the developing countries. China needs to make a bigger effort

as well, but has already moved considerably.

European Proposal a "Big Mistake"

14. (SBU) Alfonso de Alba noted that a particularly difficult sticking point with the United States involves how to deal with Kyoto - do we have Kyoto and something else that involves the United States and the developing countries? Or, as the Europeans asked for in Bangkok, a single Kyoto-like document that all countries would ratify? Alfonso de Alba characterized the latter as a "big mistake" on the part of the Europeans, as it is much too late in the game for a completely new concept and the proposal had the effect of throwing the process off track and the potential to make some countries shy away from any proposal at all. Instead, Alfonso de Alba said that he favored getting the substance right first and then going for format -- an instrument that can convey the already-agreed substance appropriately.

15. (SBU) Alfonso de Alba was careful to note that Mexican climate change negotiator from the environment ministry (SEMARNAT) Fernando Tudela had been misquoted last weekend at the MEF meeting in London, and that only this misquote (and not more positive statements) had reached U.S. newspapers. (Note: Tudela was quoted as calling the United States a "stumbling block" in the negotiations because it was not able to put any figures on the table until it had Congressional approval. Alfonso de Alba was firm in saying that this was an inaccurate rendition of Tudela's statement.) He said that it is "important to us to play a bridge role," where we can 'place pressure on the developing countries' to do their share

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to combat climate change. He also said that Mexico wants to develop a stronger bilateral relationship with the United States on climate change, as well as strengthen trilateral cooperation, as the Leaders declared in Guadalajara. (Note: Econoff heard the same plea on the bilateral relationship from Tudela a few weeks ago.)

16. (SBU) On the subject of the Mexican request for a Heads of State/Heads of Government videoconference, Alfonso de Alba noted that at the last minute some decisions can only be made at that level. He said that Mexico had in mind for the videoconference a small group of ten or so heads of state/government, and not before mid-November, after Barcelona, when they would know where the UN process stands. He said that President Calderon would want to talk primarily about the financing piece of the puzzle, but that there are 2-3 other key climate change issues that might be appropriate for this venue.

COP-16 Planning

17. (SBU) When asked about Mexico's plans to host COP-16, Alfonso de Alba said that Mexico will work with its available resources to host the meeting, but that the economic crisis has impacted the Mexican budget and he has to improvise with already available personnel and resources. While SRE will take the lead on the meeting, the environmental ministry (SEMARNAT) will also contribute personnel and resources. Further, Mexico will want to consult about timing, as Mexico's bicentennial of independence (September 15) and centennial of its Revolution (November 20) will occur during the timeframe set aside for COP-16 (early November). Mexico will ask to delay the COP until after November 20. He would welcome discussions in Barcelona about logistics and preparations, and would also request support from the U.S. (not clear what type) for COP-16.

18. (SBU) In closing, Alfonso de Alba said that he did not really expect a single and comprehensive document from Copenhagen. Rather he hoped for a political commitment that would engender positive momentum and which could serve as a

basis for further refinement as countries were able to commit more definitively.

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